Working to Keep Hospitals Financially Solvent During COVID-19 Response
AzHHA President and CEO Ann-Marie Alameddin penned a letter to the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) this week requesting immediate action to help keep hospitals open during and following the current COVID-19 pandemic response. Alameddin noted, “Hospitals need immediate cash infusion, notwithstanding relief that may come from recent federal legislation and a pending special legislative session. Hospitals are facing severe cash shortages NOW. Cash reserves are being depleted drastically and many facilities will have no cushion to pay salaries and purchase needed supplies to respond to the disaster.” Read the entire letter here.

Find a list of all AzHHA advocacy letters related to the COVID-19 response effort here: https://www.azhha.org/covid-letters.

Chief Nursing Officers Discuss Surge Staffing Plan
AzHHA convened a call with member Chief Nursing Officers throughout the state earlier today to discuss surge staffing. Hospitals are reaching out to nurses and other key staff who have recently retired, spreading the word in retirement communities and working with school, home health, hospice, ambulatory surgery and other nurses to augment the workforce. In addition, hospitals are proactively orienting nurses who are currently in non-direct care roles to prepare them to return to bedside care. The group requested to meet weekly. Please send agenda items and hot topics to Vicki Buchda, AzHHA’s Director of Care Improvement.

Expansion of the Accelerated and Advance Payment Program
Working to increase cash flow to providers of services, including hospitals impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has greatly expanded its accelerated and advance payment program for the duration of the public health emergency. Under this program, providers can request interest-free loans that do not have to be repaid for up to one year, with minimal effort. The program will be administered by Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs).

Inpatient acute care hospitals, children’s hospitals, and certain cancer hospitals can request up to 100% of the inpatient, outpatient, and pass-thru payments made during the 6-month period, July 1, 2019, through December 31, 2019. While critical access hospitals can request up to 125% of all Medicare payments received during the same period. Repayments must be made within one year. Other providers can request payments up to 100% of the payments made during the
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3-month period October 1, 2019, through December 31, 2019, and must repay the advance within 210 days.

To qualify, the provider must:
- have billed Medicare for claims within 180 days immediately prior to the date of the request,
- not be in bankruptcy,
- not be under active medical review or program integrity investigation and
- not have any outstanding delinquent Medicare overpayments

Requests for advances should be made through the MACs using the forms on their websites. The MAC will let you know the maximum amount you can drawdown. Each MAC is to review and issue payments within seven calendar days of receiving the request. More information about the program may be found at the following link:


PPE Shortages; a message from ADHS
The Arizona Department of Health Services issued new guidance Thursday regarding shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) both nationally and statewide. The State of Arizona is working to source and procure additional PPE via several supply sources for state agencies, county health departments, and healthcare facilities across the state.

ADHS encouraged PPE recipients to “optimize” the use of PPE. Optimizing the use of PPE includes implementing administrative and environmental controls to optimize the use of PPE, as well as utilizing reusable supplies, extending the life of supplies where appropriate, and prioritizing supplies for higher-risk patients and procedures. A complete set of guidelines can be located on the ADHS webpage here, as well as on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) webpage here.

By accepting resources from the State of Arizona, you are agreeing to implement these strategies to optimize PPE in order that we can maximize the protection of our frontline healthcare personnel.

Want to Donate?
The Arizona Coalition for Emergency Response (AzCHER), a federally funded program of AzHHA, is facilitating the exchange of in-kind (i.e., non-financial) healthcare resources of all sorts, not just PPE. The process works in this way:
1. Healthcare facilities needing supplies, equipment, or other goods/service can complete a resource request form through the AzCHER website here. Submit the completed form to azcheradmin@azhha.org.
2. AzCHER staff populate the resource request log located on the website here.
3. When a potential donor contacts AzCHER with goods or services to contribute, they are directed to the resource request log noted above. The donor is urged to contact a facility having a matching need directly.
AzCHER does not accept or store any supplies or equipment, but rather encourages the direct interaction between donors and healthcare recipients.

Protect Yourself from COVID-related Fraud
As the United States and the world deal with the ongoing pandemic, the FBI’s national security and criminal investigative work continues. There are threats you should be aware of so you can take steps to protect yourself.

- Children who are home from school and spending more time online may be at increased risk of exploitation.
- Anyone can be targeted by hackers and scammers.
- Protecting civil rights and investigating hate crimes remain a high priority for the FBI.

Use the resources on this page to help keep yourself and your family safe from these threats.

AHA urges Treasury, Federal Reserve to implement CARES Act Loan Program - the American Hospital Association today urged the Department of Treasury and Federal Reserve to implement a Mid-Sized Business Loan Program quickly and in a manner that ensures such access will be attainable for hospitals.

FDA makes changes to face mask and respirator enforcement policy during COVID-19 outbreak - the Food and Drug Administration has revised its face mask and respirator guidance to provide significant, additional enforcement discretion for personal protective equipment that is not subject to COVID-19 emergency use authorization.

FCC establishes new telehealth programs - the Federal Communications Commission last night released an order establishing a telehealth program to support health care providers responding to the pandemic, and adopted final rules for the longer-term Connected Care Pilot Program.

FEATURE SPOTLIGHT

Valleywise Health Reaches Out to Refugees with COVID-19 Educational Videos
Valleywise Health is helping refugee communities across the country stay informed about the coronavirus through educational videos in 10 languages -- Arabic, Burmese, English, French, Karen, Kirundi, Maay, Somali, Spanish, and Swahili.

The Valleywise Health Pediatric Refugee Clinic produced the videos with their Cultural Health Navigators. These employees are trusted members of the local refugee communities and function as liaisons between Valleywise Health and their patients. You can view the 10 videos here.

TMC Healthcare and Partners Debut Public Service Announcement
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“During this health crisis, we stand ready to serve and are working together to reduce the spread of COVID-19. We are all working together for the health and safety of our community.”

COVID-19 Updates
Ensure your hospital response team is on AzHHA’s COVID-19 member advisory distribution list. Visit our website https://www.azhha.org/covid19 and sign up to receive future member advisories and COVID-19 updates.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic status, AzHHA is sharing its member advisory with all Arizona hospital and healthcare members to get you the information you need to care for patients in your communities.

Questions? Contact us at Communications@AzHHA.org.